

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



June 8, 1987

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE No. I-45-87

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES PROVIDING EMERGENCY SHELTER CARE

The Department is currently developing a comprehensive policy regarding the appropriate role of Foster Family Agencies (FFA) in the out-of-home placement of children. While developing this policy statement, it has come to our attention that some county welfare departments (CWD) are contracting with FFAs for emergency shelter care placements i.e., emergency shelter care placements for children receiving Child Welfare Services.

Our preliminary analysis of how FFAs provide emergency shelter care placements has raised the following issues:

- o Since the FFA licensing category was not originally designed to provide direct care and supervision of children, certain safeguards are absent from current licensing regulations (e.g., regulations that deal with sleeping, bathing, and feeding accommodations) for situations where FFA administrative offices rather than family homes serve as the temporary shelter site.
- o FFAs which provide emergency shelter care are placing children in group homes and county licensed foster family homes. This practice raises several concerns. The first is the appropriateness of placing a child who has just come to the attention of the CWD directly into a group home. Careful assessment is necessary to determine if a child has needs that would require placement in a group home. If the child is placed in a group home immediately after removal from his/her home, it would suggest that the placement decision was made based on the availability of space rather than the child's needs. The second concern is in regard to an FFA placing a child in a county licensed foster family home. Since counties receive funding for the recruitment and licensing of foster parents, this type of placement places an unnecessary drain on the financial resources of the CWD while duplicating payments for the same activity because reimbursement for recruitment is also built into the FFA rate.

- o Some counties who contract with FFAs for emergency shelter care placements are establishing and paying, for all children placed, a rate equal to the FFA treatment rate (AFDC-FC). Regulations require that in order to receive such a rate, the county must document in the child's case record the need for placement with the FFA rather than a foster family home. Justification for the higher rate is based on assessed special needs of the child which necessitate that the FFA must provide "treatment services" to the child in addition to the social work services provided by the county.

In consideration of the above issues, the Department will continue to evaluate how FFAs provide emergency shelter care placements and upon completion of our evaluation issue a policy statement. Since the forthcoming policy statement may recommend restrictions on the provision of emergency shelter care by FFAs based on the above issues, counties are cautioned against relying solely on FFAs for the provision of emergency shelter care until the issues are resolved. The Department will be asking FFAs and CWDs for information on the provision of emergency shelter care in the near future. Your cooperation in responding timely to any future inquiries on this subject will greatly assist our efforts to resolve this problem.

If you have any questions regarding this ACIN, please contact Mr. Ritch Hemstreet, Chief, Family and Children's Services Policy Bureau, 744 P Street, MS 9-103, Sacramento, California 95814 (916) 322-6333.



LOREN D. SUTER
Deputy Director
Adult and Family Services Division

cc: CWDA